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ABSTRACT

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Relationships Among Children's Perceptions of Parent Behavior, Parents' Inferences of Their Children's Perceptions, and Parents' Self-Perceptions

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Running Head: Parent-Child Perceptions

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Abstract

This research examined the degree of correspondence between children's perceptions of their parents' caregiving behavior, those parents' self-perceptions, and the parents' inferences about how their behavior would be perceived by their child. 80 child (7 year-olds) parent pairs completed modified Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaires, designed to elicit their perceptions and inferences about the parents' behavior with the child. Parents' and children's responses were compared on three composite measures, based on the result of a factor analysis of the responses to the questionnaire: Loving, Punishing, and Demanding, parent behavior. Significant (or marginally significant) mean differences were found between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions, between children's perceptions and parents' inferences, and between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences on all three BPB factor composites. Results of a correlation analysis generally confirmed a conclusion that there was little correspondence between children's and parents' measures. The findings were discussed in terms of the possible importance of a lack of agreement between parents' and children's judgments about parent caregiving behavior for parent-child interaction and communication.

Relationships Among Children's Perceptions of Parent Behavior, Parents' Inferences of Their Children's Perceptions, and Parents' Self-Perceptions

A recent trend in research on socialization in children has been an increase in attempts to measure parental caregiving behavior directly through observations, rather than through the self-reports of the family members themselves. This shift in research tactics appears to have been motivated, at least in part, by a desire to decrease the influence of social desirability sets and other types of response biases in reports of parental caregiving behavior. However, one negative consequence of this increasing effort towards obtaining "accuracy" in the measurement of parenting activities is a decrease in attention paid to some important person perception processes: the definitions of the situation that participants bring to their social encounters and their awareness of each other's definitions. There is evidence that such person perception variables are potentially important determinants of social behavior within the family and of children's socio-psychological development (Messe', Stollak, & Michaels, 1977; Michaels, Messe', & Stollak, 1977; Stollak, Messe', Michaels, & Ince, 1977).

Interpersonal Theories of Personality Development (e.g. Mead, 1934; Freedman, Leary, Ossorio, & Coffey, 1951; Sullivan, 1953) have noted that the degree to which social perceptions are congruent has an impact on the quality of interpersonal functioning. Within this framework, the present research examined the degree of correspondence between children's and parents' perceptions of, and inferences about, an important aspect of family life: the patterns of parental caregiving behavior.

Specifically, we obtained measures of the way a group of 7-year

old children perceived the caregiving behaviors of one parent, that parent's self-perceptions of those behaviors, and the parent's inferences about the child's perceptions. Sullivan (1953) speculated that mutual agreement in the perceptions of parent and child enables them to draw closer together and to establish real communication. If the child and parent view parent behavior similarly, it is more likely that the child would be able to anticipate correctly the parent's behavior in a particular situation, since the parent would be acting on similar perceptions of the situation as the child. On the other hand, if parents' self-perceptions and the children's perceptions of the parent's behavior differ, breakdowns in communication and understanding may result. When the parent's and child's perceptions of parent caregiving behavior differ sharply, the child could find himself/herself in a "double bind", since the parent's verbalizations about his/her caregiving behavior (based on parental self-perceptions) tell the child that one thing is occurring, while the child's perception of the parent's actual behavior indicates that something different is occurring.

Similar difficulties may occur when there is a lack of correspondence between children's perceptions and parents' inferences. Writers in the symbolic interactionist tradition in social psychology (e.g., Mead, 1934) have suggested that people are continuously making judgments about how they appear to another person, and that they "regulate" their behavior in order to project a desired image of themselves to a significant other. However, in order to obtain the intended image of himself/herself in the Other's eyes, the perceiver must be able to infer accurately how the Other views him/her. In the case of parent-child interaction, when the parents' inferences are generally accurate, the parent can deal effectively with the

child's perceptions of him/her and can behave so that the child is likely to perceive the parent as the parent thinks best. On the other hand, misconstruing the child's perceptions of parental caregiving behavior may cause the parent to respond in ways that work against obtaining the desired image of himself/herself in the child's eyes.

Thus, one reasonable first step in the study of parent-child person perception processes is to measure the extent of correspondence between children's perceptions, parents' self-perceptions, and parents' inferences in normal families. There is some indirect and retrospective evidence that perceptions of parent caregiving behavior changes with age and that, in general, the child's view of important others is different from his/her parents' view. Serot and Teevan (1961) compared children's and parents' perceptions of the "idealness" of the parent-child relationship in their family, using the Swanson Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Swanson, 1950), and found very little agreement (nonsignificant correlations) between parents' and children's perceptions. Unfortunately, means for parents' and children's idealness ratings were not presented and, thus, it was not possible to determine whether or not there were any systematic differences between parents and children on the idealness rating.

Zucker (1971) examined the retrospective reports of adolescents and parents concerning the parents' caregiving behaviors towards the subjects when they were young children. The parents and children completed the same instrument which asked what the parents did during the time that the children were growing up. Two kinds of analyses were performed to assess the degree of correspondence between parents' and offspring's perceptions: First, separate correlation analyses were performed for each parent-child sex pair.

In no case, however, were there significant correlations for a majority of the subscales. The correlational analyses also showed that there was a stronger relationship between daughters' and fathers' perceptions than between daughters' and mothers' perceptions. This, however, was not the case for the data from families of boys.

The second type of analyses examined differences between parents and children. A number of differences between parents and offspring were found. For example, both mothers and fathers reported that they had been more affectionate and less punishing than their children remembered them to be; and parents reported that they had used more principled discipline and less physical punishment, affective punishment, and threat (fathers only) than their children remembered. These findings, while interesting, however, do not permit a direct examination of the degree of correspondence between parents' and children's perceptions because they were based on recollections of past events. Indeed, Zucker pointed this out by labeling the responses "family mythology".

The reason for differences and lack of correspondence between parents' and offspring's perceptions in the above studies is unclear. On the one hand these may be due to developmental differences in the basic perceptual organization and capacity of children and adults. If this were true, one would expect to find differences in person perceptions between children and adults when they are not relatives and when the focus of perceptions did not concern family interaction. Several studies (e.g. Yarrow & Cambell, 1963) have found such differences. However, a second possible reason for the lack of correspondence between parents' and children's perceptions is that this lack is based on the different patterns of underlying needs, motives, and

defenses that accompany the two social roles, parent and child. Numerous studies (summarized, e.g., in Shrauger & Altrocchi, 1964; Tagiuri, 1969) have shown that such personality variables, indeed, can influence person perceptions.

Based upon the indirect evidence summarized here, we expected that there would be systematic differences in (and little, if any, correspondence between) parents' self-perceptions and children's perceptions of the parents' behavior. Moreover, the measure of parents' inferences about their child's perceptions permits examination of the ability of these people to "decenter" and to "take the role" of their child. Thus, two other related comparisons are possible: (1) the comparison between children's perceptions and parents' inferences, which would reflect the parents' ability to "see" the child's world accurately: and (2) the comparison between parents' self-perceptions and their inferences of the child's perceptions, which would indicate the degree to which they realize that the child might see their behavior differently than they do.

Method

Subjects

Seven-year old second grade children and their parents were recruited through the East Lansing Michigan School District to serve as subjects in a psychology research project for pay. Of the about 600 families who were contacted, parents of about 330 indicated initial interest in participating in this project. Of these, 143 children from 141 families were randomly chosen to be interviewed. Parents of these children were contacted by mail (after their child had been interviewed) and were asked to complete a set of

questionnaires. Responses were received from 70% of these parents.[1] All subjects in this sample were Caucasian, and the great majority were of the middle or upper-middle class socio-economic class.

Obtaining children's perceptions. The child was met by an interviewer who escorted him/her to the testing room. There the child was asked to respond orally to a forced-choice interview schedule (described below) that measured his/her perceptions of his/her parent's caregiving behavior. The interviewers were three male and two female undergraduate students especially trained to interview children. Interviewers were randomly assigned to children.

The interviewer was careful to make sure that the child understood the directions for each part of the interview before it was administered. Any words that a child did not understand were defined. Otherwise, the interviewer did not elaborate on any of the items. If the child did not understand or could not answer a question (which happened only rarely) the interviewer proceeded to the next question. To make sure that the child understood and could pronounce all possible answers, the interviewer requested that the child repeat the possible responses to the questionnaire before she/he began to answer the items. The child was reminded of the possible answers that she/he could give after every five responses.

Obtaining parents' perceptions. As noted above, after the children had completed the children's perception measure, one parent of each child was sent the two parent perception measures. She/he was instructed to complete these by himself/herself and to return them in a self-addressed and stamped envelope to the experimenter.

Perception Measures

Children's perceptions of parent behavior (Children's BPB). The modified Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaire (BPB) is a revision of an earlier measure of children's perceptions of parent behavior (Siegelman, 1965). Following the conceptual distinction suggested by Parsons and Bales (1955), the items which comprise the questionnaire are grouped into two broad classes: expressive functions, typically associated with the mother and including such variables as "nurturance", "affection", "indulgence", etc., and instrumental functions, traditionally connected with the father--for example, "physical punishment", "power", "principled discipline", etc. Fifteen subscales comprised the questionnaire as it was used in the Siegelman study.

The form of the BPB used in the current study contained some modifications of the perception instrument. The following changes were made in the scale, for the specific purpose of making the instrument more appropriate for use with early-elementary-school-aged children: (1) Some of the items were reworded slightly so that the language was easier for a young child (age 7) to understand. (2) The words "he" or "she" were added to the items on the appropriate questionnaire. (3) Only two items were used for each of the 15 subscales, thus reducing the total number of items for each parent from 45 to 30. The items selected were those deemed the most pertinent ones to the life of a seven-year old. (4) The responses to the items were changed from responses denoting frequency (e.g., almost every day, once a month, etc.)to aforced choice format in which each item could be answered with one of the following alternatives: "Definitely yes" "Probably yes",

"Definitely no", or "Probably no". (5) Although almost all of the subjects probably could have read the items, it was decided to administer the questionnaire orally to make the task less frustrating and time-consuming for the child.

To quantify the data obtianed from the interview, each "Definitely yes" response was given a score of 4, while a score of 3 was given to each "Probably yes" response, a score of 2 to each "Probably no" response, and a score of 1 to each "Definitely no" response.

Parents' self-perceptions of their behavior with their child (Parents' BPB-Self-Perceptions). One parent per child was asked to complete a modified BPB, giving perceptions of his/her own behaviors towards the child who participated in the research. The items essentially were identical to those that were presented to the children, with the only change being the substitution of the word "I" (indicating that the parent is answering about his/her own behavior) for the words "she" or "he" on the child's form. The scoring system was identical to that used on the Children's BPB.

Parents' inferences of their children's perceptions (Parents' BPB-Inferences). The parents also were asked to complete a different, modified BPB, this time indicating their inferences of how they thought their child perceived them. The items for this questionnaire were identical to those on the Children's BPB. The scoring system was identical to that used for the other questionnaires.

Results

The data from the three original perception measures--children's perceptions, parents' self-perceptions, and parents' inferences--were pooled and submitted to a principal axis factor analysis. The pooling of data

appeared appropriate given that preliminary analyses of the factor structures for each of the individual instruments showed them to be very similar. To determine whether sex of child or sex of parent influenced the behavior dimensions derived from the factor analyses, separate factor analyses were also conducted for the father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, and mother-daughter data. The factor structures for all of these groups again were very similar, and, thus, the decision was then made to use the factor analysis of the total sample as the basis for subsequent data analyses.

A set of criteria was developed for defining and deriving composite scores for each factor. These composite scores then were used for the analyses that are described below.

Two types of analyses were used to examine the degree of correspondence among the three perception measures: (1) Analyses of variance (with Newman Keuls tests) were used to examine if there were systematic differences between the three perception measures: (2) Correlational analysis was used to test the extent of the relationship among the three perception measures.

Factor Analysis of BPB

The data for the 15 subscales of the Children's BPB, the Parents' BPB-Self-Perceptions, and the Parents' BPB-Inferences were pooled and submitted to principal components factor analysis. $\underline{R}^2$ was used as the estimate of communality, and factors were rotated to varimax solution. This procedure generated four factors. The factors that were produced by varimax rotation were defined by the following criteria: (1) all items that were relevant to a factor had to load higher than .45 on that factor, and (2) such items also had to load less than .3 on every other factor, unless (3) the difference

between the highest loading and the next highest loading was greater than .2, and (4) at least two items had to meet these criteria for a factor to be defined as useful.

Of the four factors derived from the rotation, the first three, accounting for 92.5% of the cumulative variance, met the definition criteria. Factor I, labeled "Love", had high loadings on the subscales of Nurturance, Affective Reward, Instrumental Companionship, and Affiliative Companionship. Factor II, labeled Punishment, had high loadings on the subscales of Social Isolation, Expressive Rejection, Physical Punishment, Deprivation of Privileges, and Affective Punishment. Factor III, labeled Demanding, had high factor loadings on the subscales of Protection, Power, and Achievement Demands.

Composite scores were calculated based on the three factors by summing the scores for the subscales that defined each factor. For example, the composite score for Factor I was computed by adding the scores for the subscales: (1) Nurturance; (2) Affective Reward; (3) Instrumental Companionship; and (4) Affiliative Companionship.

Mean Differences Among Children's Perceptions, Parents' Self-Perceptions, and Parents' Inferences

The means and standard deviations for the three factor composites of children's perceptions, parents' self-perceptions, and parents' inferences are presented in Table 1. To test for mean differences among the perception measures, the three BPB factor composite scores for children's perceptions, parents' self-perceptions, and parents' inferences first were submitted to 2 (sex of target parent) by 2 (sex of child) by 3 (perception measure type) ANOVAs. Table 2 summarizes results of these analyses. As Table 2 indicates,

results showed a significant effect for perception measure type for all three factors.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Inorder to examine if there were mean differences between each pair of perception measures, Newman Keuls tests were performed for each of the three BPB factor composite scores. For Factor I (Loving), the results of the Newman Keuls analyses showed a significant difference between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences. Parents perceived themselves as significantly more Loving than they inferred their children would perceive them ($p < .05$). Also, children perceived their parents as significantly more Loving than the parents inferred that they would be perceived ($p < .05$), and children tended to view their parents as more Loving than the parents viewed themselves ($p < .10$).

For Factor II (Punishing), results of the Newman Keuls analyses mirrored the findings for Factor I scores. Parents inferred that their children would view them as more Punishing than they perceived themselves to be ($p < .05$). Also, parents inferred that their children would perceive them as more Punishing than the children actually perceived them, and parents tended to perceive themselves to be more Punishing than they were perceived by their children ($p < .10$).

For Factor III (Demanding), the results of the Newman Keuls analyses once more revealed a significant difference between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences. Parents inferred that their children would view them as more Demanding than they perceived themselves ($p < .05$). There also was a significant difference between children's perceptions and parents'

self-perceptions and a marginally significant difference between parents' inferences and children's perceptions, but the pattern of these differences was the opposite of that found for the Factor I and Factor II composite scores. In this case, children perceived their parents as more Demanding than the parents perceived themselves to be, and parents tended to infer that they would be perceived as less Demanding than their children actually perceived them.

Finally, the analyses (see Table 2) also indicated that the Sex of Parent x Sex of Child interaction approached significance for Factor II. Inspection of the pattern of means that underlied this effect revealed that parent tended to be perceived as less punishing when the parents and child were of different sexes.

Correlations among Children's Perceptions, Parents' Self-Perceptions, and Parents' Inferences

Correlation coefficients were performed to examine the degree of relationship between the three perception measures within each factor composite score. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 1. Correlations for each pair of corresponding factors were examined for: (1) whether or not they significantly differed from zero; and (2) in the cases where the correlations were either low or moderate, the confidence interval into which it is 95% sure that the actual (true) correlation falls.

As is shown in Table 1, the correlation between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions and between children's perceptions and parents' inferences for Factor I (Loving) were nonsignificant, whereas the correlation between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences was very high and significant on Factor I. For Factor II, the correlation between children's

perceptions and parents' self-perceptions was nonsignificant. However, the correlation between children's perceptions and parents' inferences approached significance for Factor II. The correlation between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences was very high and significant. For Factor III, the correlation between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions was significant. There was a marginally significant correlation between children's perceptions and parents' inferences on this factor. Again, there was a very high (and significant) correlation between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences on Factor III.

Since the magnitude of the obtained correlations between children's perceptions and the two parent perception measures always was low, it was decided to examine the 95% confidence interval for these values. Table 3 presents the upper and lower limits of these intervals. As Table 3 reveals, in each case, even the upper limit for the magnitude of the actual correlation between the children's and parents' perception measures is quite low.

Insert Table 3 about here

Thus, the results of both the significance tests and the analysis of the 95% confidence intervals for the true correlations appears to support a conclusion that there is low correspondence between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions and inferences.

Sex Differences in Correlations for the Corresponding Factors

In addition to the analysis for the total sample, separate correlation analyses were performed for the four parent-child sex dyads: mother-son; mother-daughter; father-son; and father-daughter. This attenuated the sample size considerably so that conclusions based on the resulting correlations would be more tenuous. While this procedure produced some significant cor-

relations, primarily for data from male children, there did not appear to be a meaningful pattern to these results. For example, the correlation between sons' and mothers' perception of the mothers' Punishing behaviors (Factor II) was positive (r = .31), while it was negative for the father-son data (r = -.62). Given these and similar results it did not seem useful to present these findings in detail.

However, as for the correlations derived from the total sample, the correlations between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences for the four sex dyads all were highly positive and significant.

Correlations between the Three Perception Measures across Factor-Composite Scores

In addition to examining the correlations between the three perception measures within each set of factor-composite scores, the correlations across factor-composite scores also were examined. Out of the total of 18 of these correlations, 7 were significant and 1 was marginally significant. Again, most (5) of the significant correlations reflected relationships between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences. Only 2 of the "across factor" correlations between the children's and parents' composite scores were significant, while 1 was marginally significant. The most intriguing of these results were the findings that the more parents tended to perceive themselves as Loving, the more their child tended to see them as Punishing (r = .25, p < .05), and the more the parents tended to infer that their child would perceive them as Loving, the more their child saw them as Punishing (r = .25, p <.05).

Discussion

Results of the analysis of variance and the Newman-Keuls analyses supported the expectation that there would be systematic differences between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions. Together with the additional findings of systematic mean differences between children's perceptions and parents' inferences, and between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences, an interesting pattern of results emerges. It appears that children generally view their parents' caregiving behavior in a more positive light--i.e. more Loving and less Punishing--than the parents either view themselves or expect their children to view them. Also, it appears that parents consistently infer that their children will view them more negatively than they view themselves. The one exception to this pattern is for Factor III (Demanding). Although the parents inferred that they would be viewed as more Demanding than they viewed themselves, the children actually viewed their parents as more Demanding than the parents viewed themselves or inferred that their children would view them. However, a close examination of the items that comprised the composite score for Factor III suggests that these behaviors cannot be easily classified as either positive or negative parent caregiving behaviors. Although the items that comprised the Factor III composite score reflect strict and controlling parent behavior, they also can be interpreted as indicating concern and involvement with the child.

Further examination of the pattern of the above relationships shows that parents not only systematically misjudge their children's perceptions of them in a negative direction, but that, in comparison to their self-perceptions for Factors I and II, their inferences are in the opposite direction from

what is actually the case. The parents infer that they will be perceived more negatively than they perceive themselves, when in actuality they are perceived more positively by their children than they perceive themselves. Thus, from the parents' viewpoint the situation is a pessimistic one.

One possible explanation for the mean difference findirgs between the children's and parents' perception measures is that these could have resulted from the presence of a social desirability response set in the children's responses to the BPB, causing the children to report their parents behavior in a more positive light than they perceived them. However, several factors argue against the social desirability explanation

First, it is hard to see why the children alone would be affected by social desirability. Rather, one might expect, as has been suggested by several writers (e.g. Ausabel, Balthazer, Rosenthall, Blackman, Schpoont & Welkowitz, 1954) that children should be less subject to being influenced by social desirability than their parents, since they are more naive about social situations and expectations. Secondly, to the extent that Factor III (Demanding) portrays "negative" parent behavior, on this factor, the children perceived a greater amount of this behavior than did the parents. It would be difficult to explain why social desirability would operate on Factors I and II but not on Factor III. Thirdly, the finding of a significant correlation between parents' self-perceptions of Loving behavior as well as parents' inferences of Loving behavior and children's perceptions of Punishing behavior runs counter to a social desirability explanation, especially since these correlations are higher than any of the correlations for the perception measures between parents and children within the factor composite scores. Finally, even if social desirability was a confounding factor with respect to

the measure of children's perceptions, the mean difference findings for children's perceptions and parents' inferences would still be of interest, since the parents were asked to predict their children's responses to the questionnaire, and their inability to do this would indicate some difficulty in being able to "role-take" their children's orientation to the test situation.

The very high correlations for parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences on all three factors showed that the more parents' perceived themselves to exhibit a certain type of behavior, the more they inferred that their children would perceive this behavior as well. Thus, there seems to be a constant difference between parents' self-perceptions and parents' inferences. Since there was an absence of strong correlations between parents' inferences and children's perceptions, this suggest that parents tend to use their own perceptions as a basis for making their inferences of how their children see them, rather than being able to "decenter" and thereby make accurate inferences.

A problem in attempting to explain both the mean differences and the low correlations between the perception measures for parents and children is the difficulty of establishing the degree to which either group's perceptions are distorted. Reviews of the research on person perception processes (e.e., Tagiuri, 1969) have pointed out that there is no existing procedure for arriving at an entirely bias-free, accurate baseline of behavior since, ultimately, every means of measurement entails its own observer biases. In the present study, the mean difference findings could be the result of distortion by the parents, by children, or by both. However, the fact that the correlations between children's and parents' factors are in the majority

of cases, nonsignificant, suggests that the "reality factor" is not the primary determinant of the judgments being made. If both parents and children were basing their judgments on "real" behavior, one would expect higher correlations for the corresponding factors.

Though, from the present study, one cannot determine whose perceptions are more correct, an examination of the direction of the obtained mean differences can be used as a basis for speculation about possible causes for the lack of correspondence. From the standpoint of the parents, it is possible that parents (especially middle-class parents) give less positive self-perceptions and inferences because of a tendency to feel unsure about the quality of their parenting and to believe that they fail in many ways to respond effectively to their child. These findings may also reflect a sense of alienation from their children.

From the child's viewpoint, it is possible to speculate that the children's perceptions were higher than the parents' self-perceptions and inferences on Factor I and Factor II due to a tendency for children to idealize their parents. It seems reasonable to expect that children, who are dependent on their parents, and for whom the parents are the most important "Others", would tend to view their parents more positively than would a neutral observer.

It is important, however, that in making the above speculaitons, one understand that the findings indicate relative differences between perception measures, and do not take into account the level of absolute scores for the three factors. To obtain a clear picture of how parents and children view and infer parent caregiving behavior, one must take note of the fact that the absolute means are generally quite high on each of the three perception measures for Factor I and generally quite low on each of the perception

measures for Factor II. Thus, even though children tend to view parent behavior more favorably than the parents either view it themselves or infer that their children will view it, in all three cases, the parent behavior is still viewed quite favorably, on the average.

These findings also have important implications for research methodology in the area of parent-child relations since they suggest that the procedure of attempting to obtain "neutral" and therefore "objective" ratings of parent behavior avoids the complexity of the parent's and child's involvement with each other and leaves the researcher without adequate means to understand the full range of causal links in parent-child interaction and the socialization process. In fact, it may be that different perspectives on parent caregiving behavior are best suited to investigating different aspects of the parent-child relationship. This was pointed out by Heilbrun (1973).

> ... Given the goals of understanding and predicting maternal behavior, the mother represents the most relevant source of data. When the goal is objective recording of maternal behavior (as in establishing norms), the scientist-observer's data are preferable. Interest in understanding and predicting the influence of maternal behavior upon the child is best facilitated by tapping the experience of the child. (p. 46)

The results of this study point to the necessity for future research to examine directly the influence on the child's development of: (1) the parents' ability to make accurate inferences of their child's perceptions of their caregiving behavior; and (2) the existence of a high level of agreement between children's perceptions and parents' self-perceptions. It could be hypothesized that accuracy of parental inferences and similarity between parents' and children's perceptions, would both be related positively to

measures of children's psychologcal and social adjustment. Indeed, in a second study with this sample of parents and children we found that measures of "accuracy" and "similarity" did, in fact, predict a wide spectrum of children's social behavior (Michaels, Messe', & Stollak, 1977).

The finding of systematic differences between children's perceptions and parents' inferences suggests that it might be helpful to devise a training program to teach parents to infer their child's view of their behavior more accurately. Furthermore, given the relative ease of obtaining the children's and parents' perception data, indices of "accuracy" and "similarity" may be potentially useful as diagnostic tools for pointing out potential difficulties in parent-child communications.

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Footnote

[1]For the purposes of the present research, however, only the data from one of each child subject's parents were used; this parent (the "target" parent) was always the same sex as a randomly assigned undergraduate, with whom the child subject interacted in the playroom as part of another study that is not reported here. Given the parents who returned completed questionnaires, it was possible to use the data from 33 "target" fathers and 46 "target" mothers.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Perception Measures

Perception Measure	Subscale Mean	Subscale S.D.	Correlation with Parent Variable: Children's Perceptions	Parent's Self Perceptions	Parents' Inferences
Factor I: Loving					
Children's Perceptions	7.01	0.83	--	.06	.07
Parents' Self-Perceptions	6.81	0.77	--	--	.78***
Parents' Inferences	6.43	0.927	--	--	--
Factor II: Punishing					
Children's Perceptions	4.34	1.20	--	.13	.15*
Parents' Self-Perceptions	4.60	2.98	--	--	.85***
Parents' Inferences	5.05	1.12	--	--	--
Factor III: Demanding					
Children's Perceptions	5.88	1.18	--	.19**	.16*
Parents' Self-Perceptions	5.42	0.81	--	--	.79***
Parents' Inferences	5.64	0.78	--	--	--

Note: Subscale means refer to the average subscale score for a particular factor. Subscale Standard Deviations refer to the average standard deviation for a subscale on a particular factor.

* $p < .10$
** $p < .05$
*** $p < .01$

Table 2

Summary of Analysis of Variance for the Three Perception Measures

		Factor I (Loving)		Factor II (Punishing)		Factor III (Demanding)	
Source	df	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
Sex of Adult (A)	1	0.14	0.01	0.61	0.01	15.42	1.19
Sex of Child (B)	1	1.04	0.05	15.79	0.31	11.67	0.90
A X B	1	4.56	0.24	159.22	3.11*	4.98	0.38
Error I	76	18.99		51.24		12.99	
Perception Measure (C)	2	110.34	13.90**	260.34	12.99**	38.53	7.06**
A X C	2	13.20	1.66	20.55	1.03	8.94	1.64
B X C	2	10.07	1.27	1.89	0.29	0.06	0.01
A X B X C	2	0.95	.12	3.92	0.20	8.76	1.61
Error II	152	7.94		20.04		5.46	

** $p < .01$
* $p < .10$

Table 3

95% Confidence Intervals for Obtained Correlations Between Children's and Parents' Perception Measures

Factor Composite Scores	Limit of Confidence Interval	
	Lower	Upper
Correlations Between Children's and Parents' Perceptions		
I: Loving	-.16	.28
II: Punishing	-.09	.35
III: Demanding	-.03	.41
Correlations Between Children's Perceptions and Parent(s) Inferences		
I: Loving	-.15	.29
II: Punishing	-.07	.37
III: Demanding	-.06	.38